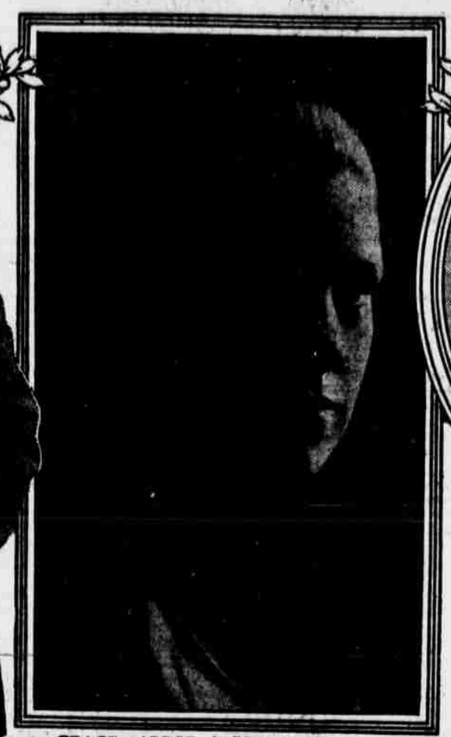
APRIL OFFERINGS in the THEATRE

JOHN BARRYMORE in "THE JEST"

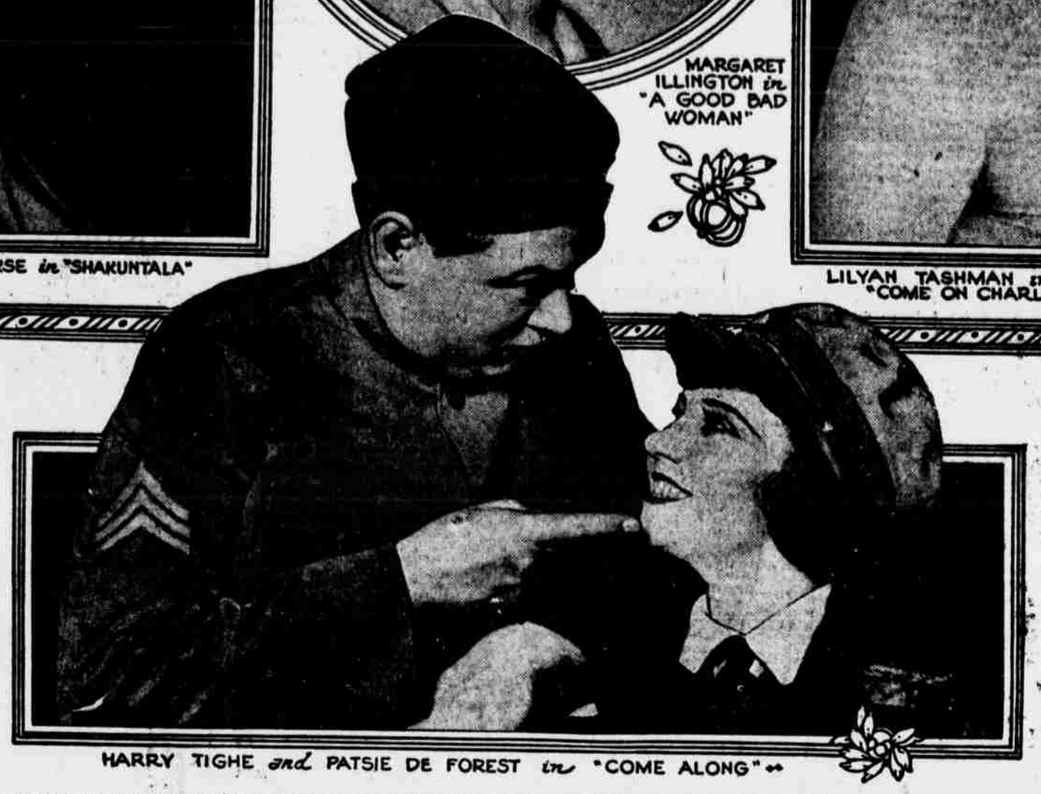


GRACE MORSE in "SHAKUNTALA"

MARGARET ILLINGTON in "A GOOD BAD WOMAN"

LILYAN TASHMAN in "COME ON CHARLEY"

LIONEL BARRYMORE in "THE JEST"



HARRY TIGHE and PATSIE DE FOREST in "COME ALONG"

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

It is in a measure unlucky that such an entertaining play as "Friendly Enemies" rests to any degree on the war. Inevitably public interest in it will wane. Yet were its theme not limited in interest in this way, there need be no end to such a piece. This is not altogether due to the skilful work of its two authors, Shipman and Hoffman. They have assuredly written an admirable play. The writer had the opportunity to witness its first on a languid afternoon of early spring. The audience, which arrived slowly, was apathetic. A great holiday parade had occupied all other external interests in the city the day before. The time was not propitious for enthusiasm in the theatre over a war play. The real thing had just passed too near.

It seemed a severe test of the skill of the two authors. But they came through it triumphantly even before such an unpromising gathering. As the points of the play, so admirably projected through the technical finish of the playwrights, hit the spectators with unfailing directness every time they were aimed, the mood changed. There was no longer apathy. The authors moved their hearers like pawns on a chess board. There was laughter that would have been constant but for the occasional impulse to pathos which throughout the play is forever appearing. The afternoon witnessed as triumphant a representation as the drama has probably ever enjoyed.

Of course the credit for this unvarying success in effect must go to the authors. They have the creator's due which is after all in every work of art the highest due. The interpreter must ever sit on a lower plane, however brilliant his personal share in the result may be. But one is loath to deprive Louis Mann of any shade of the glory that his performance of the loyal old German must earn wherever the art of the actor is recognized. Nothing finer has been seen on the American stage in years. All the attributes of great acting are present in what Mr. Mann does with the role of the doting, faithful, irascible and good hearted old man. There is one scene of most delicious humor when over the telephone his inability to recognize a name drives him to ever increasing anger. When he recognizes it of course there is melting graciousness. Then there are minutes of deep pathos, and usually these are minutes of silence, which are as eloquent in their proclamation of a talent varied enough to encompass such extremes of the actor's art. If there were only his technical skill to admire in the representation, or only his facility as a comedian, there might be no more than the conventional words of praise for what he does in the play. But there is a depth to his acting which ennobles the scenes in which he appears, and may perhaps suggest to the authors that once in a while the actor comes near to proving that the part may be greater than the whole. Mr. Mann's expressions of paternal affection and grief impart the dignity of the noblest tragedy to parts of the play. He has put a superb dramatic performance to his credit.

But—what a short and ugly word it can be on occasions such as this—there are times when Mr. Mann sorely exaggerates. It is then that one wishes A. H. Woods or David Belasco or some big bug of the theatre might hand Mr. Mann such a physical rebuke that he would be good for the rest of his artistic life merely through the memory of it. His greeting of the boy, for instance, who was supposed to be lost is grossly overdone. And nobody could express such emotions more eloquently or naturally than Mr. Mann if he wanted to. But evidently he does not want to. Since he is altogether his own master he is not compelled to do anything he does not want to. So it is enough perhaps to enjoy the really fine and moving minutes of his acting, his beautifully sincere and truthful acting, and be grateful for them.

It is customary to hear that Rachel Crothers, who has written such an amusing comedy in "39 East," is an observer of life and that the result of her efforts in this field are to be found in her plays. It is possibly true that such merits are a part of "The Little Journey," although they are scarcely to be observed in her later play at the Broadhurst Theatre. With the exception of two characters in the first act—the ungainly twins, for instance—there seems in the new play nothing more evident than an industrious observation of the theatre. If Miss Crothers is more prosperous in her dramatic adventures now than she used to be it is due to this improving habit.

Because the imperfections or the stupidities or the crudities of plays are not dwelt on by commentators, there is not the least ground for believing that they are not observed. They are ignored because they are as unimportant as the work in which they happen to appear and as unimportant as the playwrights who are so rarely worthy the attention of educated reviewers. It happens that Miss Crothers is one of the American playwrights worth the approval of their contemporaries, so it is interesting to know where she stands. It would be unjust to accuse her of claiming to present life in her plays otherwise than as viewed through the glare of the footlights.

So, to quarrel pleasantly with Miss Crothers as to which is life, which is good theatre, in her play, does such a boarding house as that in which her characters live exist in New York to-day? Is not that establishment a derelict of the age that passed say a score of years ago? Is not the landlady seated at the head of her table and treating her boarders as her guests a picture in the comic papers rather than a reality of New York life to-day? Even her singing negro servants have their suggestion of what a part memory must have played in helping Miss Crothers to her first act.

Then where did this landlady find "a musicale of Italian music" to attend at 9 o'clock in the morning? And why did the Italian Count observe that there was little good Italian music in this country when Enrico Caruso, Claudia Muzio and the best of the artists that Italy possesses are here and usually are in the city which pays them more than any other in the world? Of any other kind of music there is no question, since music in Italy begins and ends with the opera and Toscanini's occasional symphonic concerts could not have aroused the young Count's comment.

Of the organ grinder in Central Park there should be no complaint, since he gives Henry Hull one of his most amusing speeches. Indeed, there is no occasion for any complaint of such an amusing and tender little play unless one insist that Miss Crothers drew it from her observation of life. Besides, there is no special compliment contained in that criticism. Dramas made from studying the theatre are usually much more entertaining. They are much easier for playgoers to understand and actors to play. Then their authors are much more expert in dealing with such material. A play that pretended to be life and really succeeded in being something like it would prove very confusing in our theatre.

ACTIVE MISS CROTHERS.

Rachel Crothers, not satisfied with having produced a new play during the past week, is already at work on a third comedy, and before the summer revues Miss Crothers hopes to invite us to witness her latest work.

The actual work of play construction is one of the minor details of daily routine for Rachel Crothers, who not only turns out the completed manuscript, but selects the cast and stages her plays in entirety. In this particular she is unique among American dramatists.

"Plays are living things," said Miss Crothers. "Upon the care they receive during the first stage depends the degree of success they are to enjoy after the premiere. If the manuscript is given into the hands of an unsympathetic director, who thinks his business is merely that of humanizing the characters, it almost invariably follows that the production is destined for that well known storehouse whence no travellers return.

"When I enter into a contract with a producer to handle a play of mine I always make it clear that I am to have absolute charge and supervision of the casting and the staging, and it is also my custom to specify the number of weeks required for the actual preparation. The latter feature, however, used to be somewhat elastic, but now that we work under the actor's equity contract the staging must be done within a period of four weeks. Usually that is sufficient time. One of the principal duties of a stage director is to select or 'cast' the players. Now it is obvious that no one knows better than the author just what type of player is best suited for a certain character. To the strange director the 'script is something new, the characters foreign to him, and unless he has read and reread the lines the proper result cannot be achieved. But with the author it is different. These characters have lived with him for perhaps months and months, until they have become a very part of the author's cosmos. Hence, when I proceed to cast a new play I have certain fixed characters in mind whose living prototypes must be found. And so when a group of players is sent to me at rehearsal I know immediately just what type I am in need of. Thus it does not take me more than an instant to single out the very player for the role. This, you can readily understand, makes for a truer materialization of the author's dream.

"In 'A Little Journey,' for instance, there are several roles which were very difficult to cast, this being especially true for the part of *Jim West*. Now *Jim* might have been impersonated by any one of a number of leading men from stock, but I had a very particular *Jim* in mind. To find him was a task that took me many days to complete, but after three weeks of interviewing some twenty actors I selected Cyril Keightley.

"It seems to be a standing joke with producers and many writers for the stage that the average author is unable to recognize his play after it has been produced. It seems quite the natural thing for a director to rend asunder all but the original idea of the play; they are usually lenient enough to leave the central idea untouched, being ethically bound, it seems, to change the lines, scenes and characters to suit their own conceptions, which frequently are divergent from those of the unfortunate author. At times a writer may include a scene or line not because it obviously furthers the plot but rather to avoid some subtle significance or a 'general impression.' As an illustration, in 'A Little Journey' there is a scene between *Jim* and *Julie* that the average director would surely have omitted. *Jim*, in a few crisp lines, describes his attitude toward life. His views are fresh, wholesome and inspiring. *Julie*, on the other hand, soon reveals herself to be utterly downhearted, against the world and everybody in it. That the audience may get the impression of their two temperaments I have written a number of lines that apparently have nothing to do with the play. During that scene *Jim* says: 'You know there is nothing like a good rap on the head to make us see stars that we never dreamed were in the firmament.' Although this line has no direct bearing on the action of the play, it succeeds in conveying a certain definite impression.

Like most successful plays that have found their way to Broadway, "39 East" and "A Little Journey" were passed up by many managers before Lee Shubert saw the value in both of them.

GOSNELL AGAIN.

The most salient feature about Evelyn Gosnell, aside from her physical charms—which are patent to every theatregoer whose wife will let him notice her in the role of *Alicia* in "Up in Mabel's Room" at the Eltinge Theatre—is the number of her aunts. She has English aunts, Swedish aunts, Scotch aunts, American aunts—and she even admits that since the armistice she can remember having German aunts.

Most of these relatives, together with assorted sizes of cousins, dwell in Stockholm, where Miss Gosnell did her first lisping. The British allied relatives came through a little Scotch in the family—though this has nothing to do with the fact that Miss Gosnell's father used to be a wholesale liquor merchant. She has half a dozen sisters and brothers, besides enough aunts and uncles out West to constitute a distinct human species. Like *Hebe* in "Pinafore," she could sing of "her sisters and her cousins and her aunts," on whom the sun never sets.

It was because of a spirit of enterprise that her father emigrated with his family from Sweden, and not because of the prevalence of relatives. He brought Miss Gosnell here when she was 3 years old, before she had acquired an accent. After looking about in this city and finding the ground pretty well occupied he moved to Sparta, Ill., later establishing a chain of stores near St. Louis, fifty-one miles from the small town where the infant Evelyn was developing a complexion and a temperament.

Her upbringing was indeed Spartan, and she admits she pitched hay on the farm without feeling any call for that profession. After going to high school she issued a declaration of independence and went off to St. Louis to hold the world in the hollow of her hand. She worked as a salesgirl in a department store, eventually becoming overseer over twelve other girls in the retail gossip department.

Tiring of the life of a feminine Simon Legree, she tried matrimony, feeling herself competent to boss one man. At the age of 17 she married a man of 45, but at the end of a year this conjugal venture was bankrupt. She divorced him—so any one can see Miss Gosnell has had experience for the domestic storms of "Up in Mabel's Room."

Then in 1915, after finding hay fever again unattractive, she came East, addressed in care of an English aunt. For two years she attended a dramatic school, though not with any aim of taking the drama into her keeping.

"I never had any serious thought of going on the stage," said Miss Gosnell, "though I always liked to be around stage people and hear them talk—preferably to me. I went to the dramatic school to gain poise and take the cow licks out of my speech, and I think I've succeeded so well I couldn't even imitate myself as I used to be."

Last spring the man to whom she was engaged suggested that she devote her leisure to the stage. She liked the idea and went to a manager who had been introduced to her and who told her that any time she wanted a part on the stage she'd only have to murmur it in his ear.

"But he didn't want to engage me," said Miss Gosnell; "all he wanted to do was to talk about taking me out to dinner. But I said, 'Not with that face, old cutie.'"

She was taken into a stock company at Waterbury, Conn., on the strength of the way she zoomed through a reading of "The Brat." During the summer she worked all day and most of the night in the usual stock simoon. When her term was up she'd dropped her engagement with the fiance who had started her toward the footlights, but she didn't care, because A. H. Woods had seen her in stock and given her another engagement—her first—in the present Broadway production.

WHEN IS A PLAY?

By GUSTAV BLUM, Coauthor of "A Sleepless Night."

THERE has been so much discussion among the learned doctors as to *what* is a play, it might not be amiss for the bewildered young playwright to inquire humbly "*When* is a play?" We must retrace our steps in the process of production.

For months the indefatigable dramatist develops his brain child and finally intrusts the precious infant to an honest typist with the smug, self-satisfied ejaculation, "There, at last it is finished." But poor, deluded soul. Finished? Things are only just beginning to happen to him and to "it." The worst is yet to come. One hundred typed sheets, neatly bound between blue covers, is not a play. It is a decoy for the unsuspecting manager and a snare and a delusion for the playwright himself. If he could only anticipate what cruel fate has in store for him!

The procession starts. A fateful morning finds him before the manager's desk. "What have you to say——" "Guilty," he absent mindedly interrupts, and a contract is signed. The poor manager has been duped. He thinks he sees in the manuscript things the author himself never could have suspected, let alone have planned. The manager's imagination easily transcends the playmaker's, and on the strength of what he *thinks* he sees parts with several perfectly good crisp green certificates, and the calculating author departs, grinning with malicious satisfaction and triumph.

"Ah, I have a play," cries the manager, but alas! 'tis not so—just an excuse for separating himself from more healthy simoleons.

The brain-child is now intrusted to a credible director who also thinks he sees things, possibly between the lines, in the margins or on the covers. "Ah, here is a play!" he too exclaims. But alas and alack!" Once more an error. Just an excuse for his reporting regularly at ten thirty for rehearsal instead of cantering through the park, playing pinochle or clipping coupons.

And as Shakespeare would remark, and then the actor "with shining, morning face, creeping, like snail, unwilling to" the slaughter. His is a sorry lot! What Gilbert thought of policemen and Sherman of war goes double and then some for *him*. He never realizes what will descend next upon his innocent head. Poor soul! His part, like Damocles's sword, is suspended above, ready to drop any moment and pin him to an ignominious run of several seasons—and then, again, mayhap no. "Ah, here we have a play!" he too expostulates, in a timely glee, but alas! not yet.

By this time the brain-child has undergone, at the hands of manager, director, actor, stage carpenter, porter and special officer, a re-baptism such as would make the most heartless of parents sit up and gasp. But right here it should be interposed very quickly that these venerable gentlemen usually convert a *script* into a *play*—a distinction truly with a difference. If it were more generally known just how much good directors and good actors contribute to the success of a play much more of their praises might be sung.

For instance, in "A Sleepless Night," now at the Bijou, several big laughs in the play are due in many cases to the ingenuity, originality and inspiration of the director, Oscar Eagle, and actor, Ernest Glendenning, who with the authors conceived new situations and laugh lines at rehearsals. They are ardent and efficient collaborators in their way, and it is a pleasure to accord them tribute.

By this time it has been discovered at rehearsal that they are missing obligatory situations, binding lines, entrance and exit lines, &c. These were absent in the original script when the playwright was certain "it" was a play. A play is a living thing; a manuscript is lifeless. The stage business suggested by director and actor at rehearsals could never be visualized in the reading. One of the biggest successes on Broadway to-day passed safely through the fingers of all the metropolitan managers before it found its present humble abode. It was passed up by the most expert. Even they could not see its possibilities until clothed with scenery and breathed into with life by type players. To-day it boasts five companies.

But *when* is a play? Now? Not yet. Not even the *première* makes it a play. That distinction is still deferred. We have yet the most important of collaborators to consider, the audience. Electrically speaking, the audience is the positive pole to the play's negative, without which combination no spark or current is possible. But why not the *première*? Because not until the third night can one be reasonably hopeful of a real, regular, sanely human, well balanced audience, minus theatrical wiseacres, sickly scribes and flushed wine agents.

When is a play? Answer: The third night and—maybe thereafter!

IF your true American is the blended product of many races, then there is no more genuine specimen in these parts than little Marion Saki, the dancer of Charles Dillingham's "Everything" at the Hippodrome, despite the fact that her real name is Hatsuko Sakakibara and that she first saw the light of day in Sendai, a tiny village outside of Tokio, eighteen years ago.

Her father, Gitsuo, is a Japanese, a lineal descendant of the Samurai, the highest order of Japanese nobility. In the oldest records the Sakakibari are mentioned as one of the four families of knights who founded that order, which, as is generally known, survives in many of its customs and traditions to the present day. Marion's mother was an actress born in Canada of a Swedish father and an English mother. Her name was Olsen, and on her father's side she was related to Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale.

Descendants of the Samurai, like other scions of the aristocracy, not infrequently have to work for a living, and Marion's paternal grandfather and grandmother established a flourishing trade in china and bronzes and other antiques. Her father, however, was far more interested in reviving the ancient Japanese dances and became celebrated for his wonderful sword dance in armor and other national dances celebrating the achievements of the ancient knights on his family tree. His sisters also, Mme. Yoniko and Mme. Tanaka, became famous dancers and still perform in the theatres of Tokio.

It is small wonder that little Hatsuko, or Marion, as she is now called, quickly showed an aptitude for dancing, an aptitude which was eagerly cultivated by her father. Before she came to this country, at the age of 4, she was an accomplished performer of many of the old Japanese folk dances, among them the dance of the cherry blossoms, with which Japanese children from time immemorial have welcomed the coming of spring; the coquettish fan dance, copied from the movements of the geishas, and the slow dance of the autumn leaves. Her costume was the richly embroidered kimono of her native land, and on her feet she wore the little white sandals, with a separate place for the great toe, which a good dancer moves as she might move the fingers on her hand.

Since she was 4 Marion has lived in this country. She has attended American schools and become thoroughly Americanized. Her father, Gitsuo, however, never allowed her to forget the traditional Japanese dances, in which both he and his daughter frequently appear at the Nippon Club, dancing to the music of the samisen, the Japanese instrument which might be likened to a glorified ukelele.

Marion's mother gave her daughter some rudimentary instruction in the art of toe dancing, and it was to continue this branch of the terpsichorean art that she applied to be received in the ballet class started by Pavlowa during her stay at the Hippodrome. The incomparable Russian quickly recognized the unusual talent of the little Japanese girl and singled her out for special attention.

Where the Plays Change.

SHUBERT-RIVIERA — The Shuberts will prepare New York for the vernal season with "Maytime," in which charming Peggy Wood still floats about in hoop skirts amid Sigmund Romberg's music.

STANDARD—"The Invisible Foe" will travel on the underground circuit from the Harris Theatre, where Thomas Dixon's mystery play has been materializing into money. Flora MacDonald and the original psychic currents have been retained.

SEVENTH AVENUE — Bertha Kalich, supported by A. E. Anson, Chrystal Herne and others of the original night shift, will play the good old game of conundrums by presenting "The Riddle: Woman" to Harlem at practically cost price.

LEXINGTON—While there is yet time before the bone dry law takes effect, Robert L. Downing will appear in Arthur C. Aiston's revival of the celebrated tank drama, "Ten Nights in a Bar Room."

NEW PLAYS OF THE WEEK.

MONDAY—Little Theatre: By arrangement with Winthrop Ames F. C. Whitney will present "Papa," a new comedy by Zoe Akins.

TUESDAY—Harris Theatre: H. H. Frazee will offer his annual gathering of stars in "The Good Bad Woman," a drama by William Anthony Maguire. The cast includes Margaret Illington, Robert Edeson, Wilton Lackaye and Katherine Kaelred, supported by Richard Tabor, Hazel Turney, Amy Ongley and Howard Boulden. The production has been staged by Richard Bennett.

Nora Bayes Theatre: "Come Along," a musical comedy, with book and lyrics by Bide Dudley, newspaper writer, and tunes by John Louw Nelson, will begin an engagement here, bringing New York into juxtaposition with Alsace. The cast includes Harry Tighe, Regina Richards, Paul Frawley, Billy Clark, Jessica Brown, Marcelle Carroll, Patsie De Forest, Allen Kearns, Ethel Du Fre Houston, Charles Stanton, Dan Dawson and Ernest E. Pollock.

Forty-eighth Street Theatre: "Come On, Charley," a fable in three acts and five scenes, founded by George V. Hobart on stories by Thomas Addison, will be presented with a cast including Charles Abbe, Lynne Overman, Frank McCormack, Amy Leah Dennis, Robert Rendel, Maurice Barrett, Eunice Elliott and Lilyan Tashman.

Greenwich Village Theatre: Frank Conroy will start a series of Tuesday and Friday matinee performances of "Shakuntala," the ancient Hindu play of Kalidasa, the Shakespeare of India, which first took the air 1,500 years ago. Mr. Conroy, Harold Meltzer and Beatrice Prentice will have the leading roles.

WEDNESDAY—Plymouth Theatre: Arthur Hopkins will present John and Lionel Barrymore as costars in "The Jest," an English version of Sem Bennelli's play, "La Cena Delle Beffe." The supporting cast includes Maude Hanaford, Gilda Varesi, Margaret Fareleigh, Arthur Forest and E. J. Ballantine.

PLAYS THAT LAST.

Astor, "East Is West"; Belasco, "Tiger! Tiger!"; Belmont, "A Burgomaster of Belgium"; Bijou, "A Sleepless Night"; Booth, "The Woman in Room 13"; Broadhurst, "39 East"; Casino, "Some Time"; Central, "Somebody's Sweetheart"; Century, "Let's Beat It"; Cohan, "A Prince There Was"; Cohan & Harris, "The Royal Vagabond"; Comedy, "Toby's Bow"; Cort, "The Better 'Ole"; Criterion, "Three Wise Fools"; Eltinge, "Up in Mabel's Room"; Empire, "Dear Brutus"; Forty-fourth Street, "Take it From Me"; Fulton, "Please Get Married"; Gaiety, "Lightnin'"; Globe, "The Honor of the Family"; Greenwich Village, "Hobohemia"; Henry Miller's "Mis' Nelly of N'Orleans"; Hudson, "Friendly Enemies"; Knickerbocker, "Listen Lester"; Liberty, "Moliere"; Longacre, "Three Faces East"; Lyceum, "Daddies"; Lyric, "The Unknown Purple"; Maxine Elliott's, "Tea for Three"; Morosco, "Cappy Ricks"; New Amsterdam, "The Velvet Lady"; New Amsterdam Roof, "Combination Frolic"; Playhouse, "Forever After"; Princess, "Oh, My Dear"; Punch and Judy, "Penny Wise"; Republic, "The Fortune Teller"; Selwyn, "Tumble In"; Shubert, "Good Morning, Judge"; Thirty-ninth Street, "Keep It to Yourself"; Vanderbilt, "A Little Journey"; Winter Garden, "Monte Cristo, Jr."